

MACAULAY'S USE OF AUTHORITIES

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detailed and systematic examination of the authorities would have saved Macaulay from some serious errors.

Two other classes of authorities must be more briefly treated—namely, the mass of official papers, illustrating the administrative and executive government of the time, which may be generally described as domestic state papers. Macaulay had practically no new information about the debates which took place in Parliament: he used reports of those debates which were already in print, adding here and there a little information from memoirs or letters or foreign despatches. These reports had been very little used, and as the existing histories of William III's reign were obsolete or unreadable, his animated account of proceedings in Parliament had all the air of novelty to his readers. However, he had one set of documents, illustrating parliamentary affairs, which had never been employed by any previous historian, and never printed—namely, the papers of the House of Lords. Papers relating to the proceedings of Parliament tended to be preserved in the archives of the Lords rather than the Commons, because the Lords made it a rule to insist on seeing the originals of communications laid before Parliament and declined to accept copies. Hence many papers which

properly should have found their way into the
archives of
the Lower House are now in those of the
Lords. More-
over, bills which failed to pass and
amendments not
accepted accumulated there, too, till a vast
mass of papers
for the political and economic history of the
seventeenth
and eighteenth centuries was brought
together. In chap-
ter xi, when Macaulay describes the
legislation which
followed the Revolution, he mentions the fate
of the com-
prehension bill, which marked the failure of
the last effort
to bring the Presbyterians within the fold of
the Church.